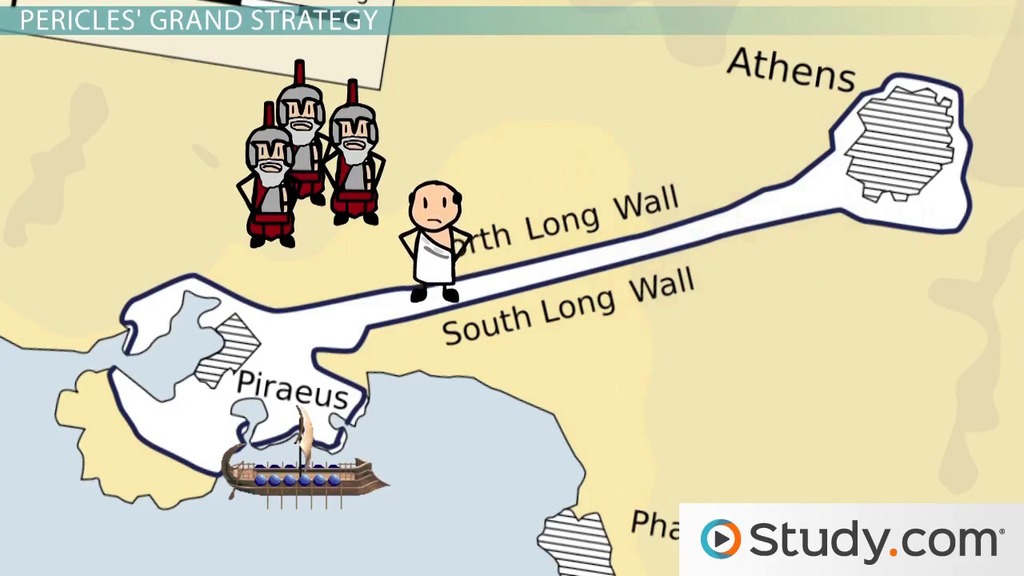
**The Peloponnesian Wars**

Athens and Sparta, both powerful Greek city-states, had fought as allies in the Greco-Persian Wars between 499 and 449 B.C. In the wake of the Persian retreat, however, Athens grew more powerful and tensions rose, escalating into nearly three decades of war. Sparta emerged victorious, while the constant fighting left Athens bankrupt, exhausted and demoralized. Neither city-state regained the military strength they once had.

The city of Athens was famous for its strong navy (navy was made up of ships called Triremes—they were fast and maneuverable with 3 banks of oars). Athens had a very mobile navy and army. Athens, under the leadership of Pericles, had built what was known as the “Long Wall” connecting the city to its harbor at Piraeus. The purpose of the wall was to protect the city in the event of a siege.

  
  
Athens was the head of a group of city-states known as the Delian League who had for years supplied Athens with money to build up a protective navy against the Persians. When some of the league members wanted to leave feeling that they no longer needed protection from the Persians and disliking that the Athenians were using the money not for ships but for beautifying their city (like building the Parthenon), the Athenians said no and forced them to stay.

 Parthenon of Pericles

Many Greek city-states began going to Sparta for help against the bullying of the Athenians. In 431 B.C., fighting broke out between Corinth (a city not too far from Sparta) and one of its colonies. Sparta decided to aid its ally and created the Peloponnesian League against Athens and its supporters.



This conflict was known as the Peloponnesian War and lasted from 499 to 449 BC. At the end of the first year of the war, Pericles gave a famous speech called the Funeral Oration. It was in honor of the soldiers who had already died. In the speech Pericles described the Athenian ideals and democracy. The speech was written down and is one of the main ways that historians know about how the people of Athens thought. Pericles strategy against Sparta was to fight them at sea and not on land. Sparta had a strong, well-disciplined army, but Athens had the stronger navy.

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| SpartansImage result for spartans | Athenian Triremes  Image result for triremes |

Sparta marched on the city of Athens that year. Because Athens had built the Long Wall that securely connected the two cities, they were able to keep the city supplied from their port city. The Spartans decided to burn down Athens’ olive trees which was their source of income. (It takes 20 years to regrow olive trees to fruit) Stuck inside their walls with poor sanitation and not much food, a plague broke out in Athens that killed over one-fourth of its population including their leader Pericles. .

In 415 B.C., an Athenian politician named Alcibiades betrayed the military plans of Athens to the Spartans. His betrayal cost the Athenians 175 ships and over 40,000 men. At the same time, Athens began to lose some of its influence over the cities in the Delian League. Some of those cities started to abandon the league.

Sparta joined forces with Persia to defeat the Athenian navy at Aegospotami in 405 B.C. Without a navy, Athens was not able to supply food to its city when it was besieged again, they surrendered in 404 B.C.

Result: Although the Spartans won the war, peace did not come to Greece. Sparta’s alliance with Persia collapsed. Sparta forced Athens to tear down its walls and destroy its navy of triremes. Because Sparta went back home and did not politically take over the Delian league, wars between the former Athenian allies continued until fifty years later when Macedonia (an empire in the North) lead by Alexander the Great’s father took over most of the Greek city-states and made them part of the new Macedonian Empire.

